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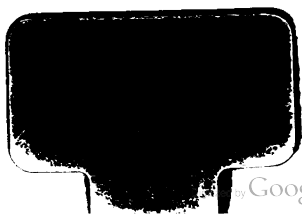
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THE
REMAINS OF THE POET
OF
JANUARY

49. 1050.



THE
FRIENDS OF THE POOR
OF HAMBURGH;
OR,
THE EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

"THE 'Friends of the Poor of Hamburg,' whose zeal and labours may serve as a model to any who wish to devote themselves to works of charity."

MME. LA COMTESSE AGENOR DE GASPARIN.

Translated from the French.

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THE
FRIENDS OF THE POOR
OF HAMBURGH, &c.

THE Society of the Friends of the Poor, founded at Hamburgh, by Mademoiselle Amélie Sieweking, is probably not unknown to many of those who regard with interest the efforts of Christian charity; but it seems to us, that the little which is known of it may justly excite the desire to know more. We have therefore extracted from the annual reports published hitherto, all that appeared to us generally useful and interesting. It will indeed be well, if, seeing the blessings which have attended the work at Hamburgh, some Christian people elsewhere feel themselves called upon also to unite, and together consecrate part of their time to the Lord, in His representatives, the poor !

Before describing the organization of this society at Hamburgh, and the spirit that animates it, we think we may interest our readers by bringing before them the commencement of the work, as Mademoiselle Sieweking has related it.

She says, " My heart was early drawn by God towards the poor and the afflicted. In my childhood, the stories which gave me the most pleasure were narratives of alms-giving and beneficence. As soon as it was in my power, I went secretly to visit poor families, and divided my pocket-money among them. Very soon I perceived that things were not as my story-books represented them. In the first place, it was not that ideal misery of half-naked people, dying of cold or hunger; and yet my small assistance was quite insufficient for the relief of the wants which actually existed. I could not, as in certain pretty stories, put an end, as by the stroke of a wand, to the sufferings of a poor family; and, moreover, I did not meet with that gratitude which I had looked for. Therefore, though I felt some pleasure, undoubtedly, in my little alms-givings, it was not the sort of pleasure which I expected.

" At the age of eighteen, I first heard of the Sisters of Charity in the Roman Catholic Church, and that idea immediately filled me with deep emotion. Oh! thought I, if I were destined to found something of that sort in our Reformed Church! I meditated on it during whole nights; the more I loved my Church the more I regretted that it was deprived of this beautiful ornament. But I also felt strongly that the desires of my heart ought to be subject to the Will of God. I

therefore waited for direction from Him, nor did I wait in vain."

Mademoiselle Sieweking then relates, how, at the commencement of the cholera, in 1831, she felt herself called upon, and how, after receiving the blessing of her adopted mother, she offered her services in an hospital, for the care of the sick poor. An appeal addressed to those of her fellow countrywomen who might be willing to join her, remained unanswered; but this silence did not discourage her. "I had not foreseen all, however," she continues; "I had expected the censure of the world, and had already learned to estimate it at its real worth; but the reproaches of Christians, of true believers in the Gospel, went to my very heart. 'High-flown pietism, self-conceited desire of martyrdom, neglect of domestic duties'—I was spared no sort of blame. They spoke without knowing my circumstances; I have never felt as I did then the insufficiency of human judgment. Since that time, I have gained much strength in this respect, and have learned that nothing is more vain than the attempt to please every one. The nearer we think ourselves to the attainment of this object, we shall find it is the farther away from us. I know only one way of obtaining, if not approbation, at least a certain degree of universal esteem: it is to advance firmly, with our eyes fixed upon our

Lord, and not turning aside, to please any one, from the path which we believe to be right. We shall hear in various quarters, murmurs and whisperings—no matter, let us go on with courage! Straightforward people will honour our straightforwardness, even when they do not participate in our views, and their opinion will put slanderers to silence.

“The sight of my sick people encouraged me in my resolution: I found strength when near them. One day, the prayers of a dying woman sank deeply into my heart; I felt strongly that that era in my existence ought not to pass away without fruit, and I loved to consider it as a consecration of my life to the service of the poor. It was then that I committed to paper the plan of a Society of Friends of the Sick and the Poor. Their relief was certainly my ruling motive; but I also thought of the benefits which would be reaped by those of my sisters who might undertake this work along with me.

“I was not ignorant that the first duties of a woman are the nearest,—those of her own home; and that if she neglects them for others, she falls under the condemnation of that text, ‘If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.’ But, for any one who seriously wishes to make a good use of it, time is,

as it were, elastic; and a great truth is contained in that apparent paradox, 'The more one does, the more one can do.'

"The life of some of those ladies for whom the usual destiny of woman is not appointed, has often occupied my mind. How many of these solitary beings I have met, and with what melancholy feelings I have seen them in their old age, when all their near relations were dead, contract by degrees the circle of their activity and of their thoughts, and at last shut themselves up entirely within themselves! Ah! it is a sad thing to live only for one's self. Once, assuredly, the holy fire of charity had burned in those hearts; but a fire which finds no food soon goes out. How many young ladies there are also, whose time, owing to circumstances, is very little occupied in household cares! How are their long hours of leisure employed? They are occupied with dress, with some little reading, perhaps, of the most frivolous kind; above all, with large pieces of embroidery for presents. But can this be a vocation for an immortal soul? No, as many of them deeply feel; and the void in their heart betrays itself by a vague desire to change their position, which we cannot consider as a crime. Lastly, how many widows there are, how many married women without children, to whom our remarks may, in some degree at least, apply? To unite all these inactive

powers for a common labour in the vineyard of the Lord, such was the wish of my heart."

Mademoiselle Sieweking knocked in vain at many doors which she had expected to see opened wide to her; she had to endure many repulses, many bitter refusals; but, sustained by the Divine Hand which guided her, she did not allow herself to be cast down. She continued her efforts, with still more fervent prayer, and had at last the joy of finding twelve Christian ladies ready to second her, whom she brought together for the first time in May 1832. Their treasury was empty, but this they disregarded. They could at least begin their visits. "In works of charity, we do not so much like extensive plans, or ambitious projects devised upon a large scale. It seems to us that a peculiar blessing accompanies small beginnings. However feeble the germ may appear, if it contains a true principle of life, the laws of nature and of grace from on high will cause it, in due time, to spring up into a tree with wide-spread branches."

These unassuming friends of the poor, however, met with opposition in all quarters. This they expected; they received it with humility, and derived much good from it. "It makes me sometimes afraid," says Mademoiselle Sieweking, "when I no longer encounter that salutary opposition which kept us watchful; and that word of

our Lord comes into my mind, ‘Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.’” “I like nothing so much in the people of the world” (she adds with St Theresa), “as their severity towards Christians. As soon as any one begins to confess Christ openly, the world will be satisfied with nothing short of perfection; they perceive his least faults at a great distance, and magnify a grain of dust on his garment into an enormous stain. This makes us faithful and vigilant.”

The precious germ which produces the great tree did really exist in the meeting on May 23, 1832. Eleven years after, the Report of May 1843 tells of 60 members, of 180 families visited, and of 10,000 marks of annual subscriptions.

The Society is exclusively occupied with the deserving poor. Not that the members suppose that, in order to become worthy of their care, vicious people will abandon their evil courses; but it is hoped that this distinction will be an additional stimulus to the good to persevere. “Perhaps,” says Mademoiselle Sieweking, “we may be enabled to assist some to avoid that quicksand of despondency, so dangerous even for the best of the poor, when no token of kindness or compassion comes to re-animate their dejected spirit. Our desire is, above all, to exercise a moral influence; and though we would not, when we meet with a penitent, repulse the

unhappy person who has brought misery on himself by great sin, yet we do not feel ourselves strong enough to overtake and to work upon those who lead a flagrantly immoral life. In a very limited sphere, we ought not to lavish our resources indiscriminately wherever it is *possible* to make use of them. It is necessary, we think, to reserve them for those cases in which it is *probable* they may be employed with advantage. We therefore devote our attention to the most respectable of the poor, and, among these, especially to the sick. There, at least, temporal assistance does not run the risk of being misapplied, and occasionally it prevents total ruin, to which the indigent are often nearly reduced in the time of sickness. There, when near the couch of suffering, we learn better to know the sick person and his neighbours; and we can never be so favourably situated for speaking to the heart.

“With regard to assistance, except in uncommon cases, it will always be given in the articles needed—fuel, clothing, nourishment for the sick, &c.* Our intention is not so much simply to give alms to the poor, as to encourage them, to lead them to exert themselves, by making their

* “Several rich people have offered to the society to have always ready at their houses, on certain days of the week, some wholesome and nourishing food, suitable for the sick.”

task more easy, by meeting them half-way. Thus we purchase large stores of fuel, or of good potatoes, which we sell to the poor by retail, at prime cost. If a family requires some article of clothing, or of furniture, we promise to procure it for them as soon as they put the half of the price into our hands.

“There are cases in which an advance of money, as a loan, is the best help that one can give. We do not, therefore, entirely disapprove of this. But we know that to give to the poor under the name of a loan is a dangerous, immoral action, which leads to idleness and to ingratitude. Therefore, when we have been called upon to make any loan of this sort, we have rigidly exacted repayment, and have, in fact, always obtained it. Every facility, indeed, is given for discharging the debt, by accepting very small sums at a time. This permission, unfortunately, is seldom offered by creditors, and yet how precious it would be to the poor! We recollect a mother of a family, who often wanted the necessities of life, but who had resolved, with the help of God, to free herself from the burden of a considerable debt. Whenever she was able to save a few pence, she took them directly to her mother to keep for her. ‘Because,’ she said to us, ‘if I had that money in my cupboard, could I resist when my children cry, “Mother, I am hungry?”’

“We cannot speak of the pressing debts of the poor without thinking of the rent, that gnawing worm, that heaviest of all cares which never leaves them for an instant. We ought to diminish it, undoubtedly, if possible; but let us beware of removing it altogether, for it is a powerful motive to economy and industry. That which appears to us the most injudicious of all kindnesses, though unhappily very common, is that of simply paying what is deficient, on the day of reckoning. If you wish to diminish a rent that appears to you very high in proportion to the means of a poor family, rather agree with them beforehand to deduct a certain part, when they bring you the whole sum. One of the most truly philanthropic institutions that we know, is one whose object is to provide houses at a reduced rent, where only poor people of good character are admitted. It is permitted, and even required, in these houses to pay by very frequent instalments. The greatest regularity is exacted. The poor person knows that on the first delay of payment he will be turned out, without seizure of his property however; but the advantage of this cheap dwelling and respectable neighbourhood is such, that he makes every exertion to retain it.

“Landlords who would establish something of this kind, or any who would lend a helping hand

to it, would render an immense service ; and we do not think it would be against their own interest, for what they would lose by the lowness of the rent, would be made up to them by the regularity of payment. In order to encourage those poor persons whom we know to be incapable of saving enough for their rent, without great efforts and painful sacrifices, we have established a sort of premium of two or three pence on the shilling, which is given by one of us on presentation of the landlord's receipt.

“ We wish to neglect no means in our power of accustoming the poor to economy and to foresight. One of the most efficacious ways appears to us to be the establishment of saving-boxes against a time of need. Those families, who, as is often the case, make most money in summer, engage to bring to us every week a small part of their wages, which we enter in two books, one of which remains in their hands. At the beginning of winter, the sum thus produced is restored to the lenders with interest of 5 per cent, provided only that they are not in arrears to their landlord ; and it is generally paid to them in fuel, potatoes, &c., at a much lower price than they can be had in the market.

“ But our chief method of giving temporal aid—that which we regard as the most important, and the most productive of good results—is by

providing work. Whenever it is possible in any way to employ the strength and activity of a man, we do so; and any one who, without a sufficient reason, refuses the work that is offered to him, loses all right to our assistance. *Pray and work.* This is our motto. But if we were compelled to make a choice, we should not hesitate to prefer work without prayer, to prayer without work. Not, certainly, that we should wish to exalt Martha at the expense of Mary; but it seems to us that the first visible effect of seeking those things which are above, ought to be a sanctifying influence upon the whole life, and, in particular, the faithful accomplishment of our earthly calling. Where we do not find this, we know not how to admit the existence of sincere piety.

“However, it is nowhere easy to procure work for all those who are in want of it. How many people reply to the demands of the poor, ‘Go and work; those who wish for work can always find it.’ This plausible axiom, on which so many well-intentioned minds take their stand, bears examination no better than many others; and if it is sometimes impossible for a Society which has extensive connections throughout the country, and whose recommendations are received with confidence, to procure employment for a workman in the vigour of life, how difficult must

it be for a sickly, feeble-looking man, or an aged and unprotected woman, to obtain it for themselves.

“ All the things that we require for our poor people, clothes, bedding, &c., we occupy other indigent persons in making. We also employ many destitute women as temporary assistants in houses where the mother of the family is confined to bed and cannot take charge of the house, and where disorder and slovenliness, if they once entered, might become a fatal habit. We have proofs every day that this kind of help is very efficacious, and it is pleasant thus to be able to benefit two poor persons at once.

“ In 1835 a sum of 600 marks having been bequeathed to us, we thought we could make no better use of it than in founding a sort of institution for employing poor workmen. All those who make things for sale, and who, for want of orders, are in destitution, may bring their articles to one of our ladies, who is especially appointed to take charge of them. She pays for them directly, and then places them in the hands of merchants who have offered to dispose of them gratuitously, or else she makes a sale of them at Christmas, or at some other favourable season of the year. No doubt there are bazaars and commission warehouses where ready-made articles are received, but not without charging interest

upon them. And then, when might the poor father of a family get his money? Might he not often be obliged, after having waited long, to sell his merchandise at half-price? When we have employed a workman in this way during a certain time, we can recommend him from personal knowledge, and our recommendation is in general well received.

“One great difficulty in every country is to find some occupation for infirm or half-blind persons, which may enable them to earn something, and this is besides, a much more effectual way of cheering their melancholy existence, than simply giving them alms. We employ them in ruling lines, in folding for the binders, in stripping quills, and particularly in drawing out old silk, which, when mixed with wool, makes a thick and warm stuff, worn by the poor themselves. There are few things, however old or useless they may appear, of which we cannot make some use for our poor people. A little practice soon makes one ingenious in this way.

“To return to the low remuneration for labour. However troublesome or fatiguing work may be, we should not so much regret that, if, when it was once obtained, it always sufficed for the support of the labourer and his family. But how often the contrary happens! Every day we hear the sad consequences of the low rate of

wages bewailed by political economists. How many young women we could instance, how many men in the prime of life who, with a sincere love of industry, with an ardent desire to support themselves, have in vain destroyed their health by over-exertion, and have been driven to despair, to suicide—well if it is only to beggary ! *

* “ While we write this, we recall to mind the poor family B., whom we have known for two years. They were recommended by different persons, who all spoke to us of the activity, the uprightness, and sobriety of the husband, of the gentleness and self-devotion of the wife. During twelve years that they had been settled in Hamburgh, B., a carpenter by trade, never wanted for work; but what sufferings, what agonies he endured ! In order to enable him barely to obtain necessary food for his increasing family, and not to lose the good-will of the cabinetmaker who employed him, he was obliged, latterly, to make two writing tables in the week, and to accomplish this he was forced to work Sunday and Saturday, and sometimes whole nights.

“ On my first visit I found him in bed, where he had been for two months, suffering from violent pain in his chest. The doctor did not hesitate to attribute it to want of rest, bad food, and over-exertion. Their best articles of furniture and clothing had been pawned by degrees, to procure the absolute necessities of life, and a child of six or seven months old had not been baptized, because they could not pay the dues. Poor B. was advancing rapidly towards complete desperation. He is a native of Wurtemberg, and was brought up in a religious family, but being entirely shut out from all Christian fellowship in our great city, his faith had gradually become weaker, and he could not recover it to serve as his stay in the day of adversity. We made him acquainted with some religious young persons, and, by degrees, aided by their kind and brotherly encouragement, along with prayer and reading of the Scriptures, hope and confidence returned to him. We also procured for him some work on rather better terms; but notwithstanding all our efforts and those of his wife, who faithfully assisted him, we were convinced that these two

“O that we could take with us into these abodes of indigence, many good and worthy housewives whose great ambition is to obtain things as cheap as possible! They are not hard-hearted! O no! with one hand they would give alms, liberal alms, but from excessive frugality, on the other hand, they urge the shopkeeper or the workmen to let them have an article a penny or twopence cheaper. These good women certainly do not consider how many tears and sighs have been caused by those pence which they are so proud of having saved. It is often, likewise, from the same love of economy and good management, that several persons unite to purchase a bag of rice, a chest of tea, or something of that kind. They thus enter in some degree into competition with the merchants of the country and deprive them of the profits of their industry. Ought we to be surprised after all this, if the most honest

persons in full vigour could not entirely, without help, support their family. We might quote many cases of this kind: we shall only mention, under another view of the subject, a young man of good character who had gradually abandoned himself to drunkenness, and who consumed in this way every night his small earnings of the day, because he had found that these earnings did not nearly suffice for the support of his wife and child. This *because* appears strange; and yet a moment of reflection and looking into one's own heart will explain it, for it is in human nature. These pictures affect one painfully. It is certainly not our task to seek for remedies of this bane of social existence; but let us not lose courage, and, however small may be our sphere of action, let us combat this evil with perseverance.”

merchants and artisans are tempted to overcharge, to exaggerate the real value of their articles, knowing beforehand that the purchasers will cheapen them till they obtain a reduction.

“ We now come to the principal part of our work, that which we consider of most importance, we mean the visits that we undertake to make personally to the poor and the sick. When we are not sure of being able to take charge of a family in a satisfactory manner, we think it better to do nothing at all, than merely to give them relief for once, which, not being followed up, often does more harm than good.

“ Should one lady be specially entrusted with the care of one or more families, to whom she is the sole representative of the society, or rather, should each family be visited by three or four members in their turn—of these two plans we preferred the latter. By thus making acquaintance with a greater number of families we acquire much valuable experience, and the judgment of several persons gives us more security than that of a single individual, who may easily, according to the character of the poor person, or her own, be carried away by inconsiderate partiality or perhaps by unjust prejudice. The day for the visit of each lady comes round often enough to allow those desirable feelings of confidence and intimacy to grow up between her

and the family. The president, who ought to superintend the whole of the work which she directs, always herself makes the first visit to any family newly admitted.

“The ladies have, for each of their visits, two shillings at their free disposal, which they lay out as they think best, but always in goods. For any larger outlay they refer to the Committee, which meets every week, unless it is some very urgent affair, such as repairs, the expense of which, besides, is very limited.

“Besides what regards the children, their regularity at school, the inspection of their certificates, of their copy-books, &c., we keep a general watch over order and cleanliness; and, above all, seek to do good to the souls of the poor: this is the chief object of our visits. Moralists have often maintained, that from the good order and cleanliness of a man one may draw a conclusion as to the purity and peace of his mind. Our experience is certainly far from contradicting this assertion; but knowing that such an estimate must be formed relatively, we try not to be unjust in our exactions. Let us picture to ourselves a small, damp, gloomy dwelling. The woman of the house is so feeble that every exertion is painful to her, or perhaps she gains her livelihood at a distance, and only returns home at night, late and weary. The clothes of the

children are in rags, but there are not even pieces of stuff to mend them ; they ought to be washed, but the children have nothing to wear except what they have on ; they have no soap, and to get money to buy it, they must stint themselves in bread, which is already too scanty. Let us picture all this to ourselves, and we shall look with less rigour upon the disorder and slovenliness of many houses. An uncommon degree of moral strength is often required to maintain order ; and many people who take credit to themselves for extreme delicacy in this respect, might possibly, if tried in the same way, not stand the test so well as those whom they blame.

“ Our readers will understand, from what we have previously said, that, far from being inflexible in our demands on this point, we try to consider the peculiar position of each family. Often, when they reply to us, ‘ Oh, ma’am, all that is very well in your houses, but what would you have ? with us it is impossible ’—our extensive acquaintance among the poor enables us to quote some cases still more unfavourable, in which, however, cleanliness is properly attended to. We can render a great service to them, by pointing out the means which they may employ, by giving good advice, not merely from theory, but learned from the practice and experience of others.

“ If their circumstances are really too difficult, we give the people some help, by providing soap or other indispensable things. If the woman of the house is ill, then we send one of those women before mentioned, who keeps order in the house, so that when the poor invalid begins to recover, and to be able to exert herself, she may not lose courage by seeing the mountain accumulated during her illness. Our visits, which are always unexpected, have been in this respect a valuable stimulus to many, for they know the importance we attach to good order, and they do not like to incur our reproofs.

“ We now pass on to sweeter and more elevated thoughts, to what directly concerns the soul. Oh! if we are truly guided by the heart in these visits, what good may not be given us to do—what consolation does the mere look of real compassion bring to the afflicted! The conflict with misery is a terrible conflict, in which the sufferer is often seized with despair, if he has not faith in a Love greater than that of man. But let a friendly heart show itself, ready to sympathize—to listen to his complaints, and at the same time to aid him in seeking the resources which he may still possess—the means of using and of turning to account the strength which remains to him—and then instantly a ray of light and hope breaks in, to reanimate his sinking

heart; and having become an object of love to his fellow-creatures, he is less tempted to doubt of the love of God.

“Sick people, for instance, like to relate in detail their sufferings—their little miseries. Alas! it is often very tedious, perhaps very tiresome; but you will not refuse them a pleasure, a solace, which is a relief to yourself also in the time of sickness? By degrees you will thus gain their friendship and confidence, and when you approach the subject of their eternal interests, they will listen as one listens to a friend; they will believe that it is for their good, and from a real concern for them that you speak in this way, and not as the mere emissary of some religious Society, which has always inspired them with a vague feeling of terror. Need we say that the essential aim of your visits, which you should never lose sight of, is to make known the Gospel, the good news. Let us declare this Gospel, then, with joy. What impression are we likely to produce if we come to communicate to others, with a gloomy and depressed look, tidings which ought to fill our own hearts, as well as theirs, with gladness? Undoubtedly the presence of the mirthful and light-hearted is apt to make the unhappy doubly feel the weight of their sorrow; and our Saviour Himself has said, ‘Weep with those who weep.’ But, though this is true when the fountain of joy is

inaccessible to the burdened spirit, it is so no longer when the sufferer himself may come and draw forth abundantly of the waters of life. A cheering hope glistens in the tear of compassion which the Christian sheds. Depressed and sorrowful hearts revive in his presence, for they feel that that peace, that calm serenity possessed by their comforter, do not proceed from his better position in this world, but from his confidence in a promise which applies equally to them, of mercy in Christ Jesus.

“In order to visit the poor and the sick with profit, we must then ourselves believe in the reality of faith and love. What we wish to obtain for others we must first have obtained for ourselves; and we cannot know how to lead any one else to God, if we are not abiding in Him ourselves. Yes, we must be animated by that faith which enables us to walk joyfully in the path of self-denial—to do good from pure love to our Saviour. We must have a heart which needs to show love to others, as the bodily life needs air; and not only as a necessity, but as a delight—a satisfaction such as could not be obtained by any gratification of the senses. We must also have, along with this, much Christian prudence—a spirit of wisdom and discretion. The poet says truly, ‘The eye that reflects the heavens most clearly, also judges best of the things of earth.’

“ Being little accustomed to the sight of all the evils of misery and disease, we might allow ourselves to be cast down and rendered powerless by it, if we were to look only at the sufferer groaning under the rod, without raising our eyes higher to the Hand which smites. The cup is very bitter to drink, but let us not forget Who filled it. Then let us consider, that as an earthly physician trusts not only to the effect of his prescriptions, but also to the care of nurses and relations, so our Heavenly Father likewise, in order that the labour of love may be brought into exercise, trusts to the care of Christian hearts, and that for this sick person in particular, He trusts to us. Can we be unfaithful to such a trust? Finally, let us always have present to our mind, during our visits, the words of our Lord, recorded by St Matthew (chap. 25, v. 40). Often the individual whom we go to see is very unamiable, very uninviting; all the painful details connected with a long illness, accompanied by misery, are very repulsive; and there is nothing in his character to attract. Our repugnance increases day by day; perhaps we are on the point of giving up. But, all at once, this thought recurs to us, ‘ It is the Lord, it is He, in the person of this poor man, Who is to be fed, clothed, visited, and comforted.’ O how the aspect of all is then changed! With what joy we repair to the

gloomy abode! And if we do not feel this joy, if we close our heart and our hand—oh! then, let us not speak of our love to Christ.

“ And, farther, let us not estimate too highly what we do for our afflicted brethren. This exaggeration has often caused a painful misunderstanding between the benefactor and the object of his bounty. It is never more than a very small portion of our time, of our money, of our strength, that we devote to the poor. But if we should be tempted to a feeling of self-complacency and pride, let us exchange circumstances with him for a moment, and put ourselves in the place of the man for whom we are doing so much. Certainly we shall then find ourselves to be very negligent labourers, and we shall blush for not doing more.

“ Animated by these feelings, let us direct our steps to the dwellings of the poor. On the way, let us recall to mind what we know of each family; and if we have already visited them, let us glance over the notes which we ought to have made. The good will be happy to find that they are so well known to us, and will the more readily give us their confidence; deceivers will be afraid to impose upon those who so thoroughly understand their affairs. If timidity and a certain self-distrust make us fear not being able to address ourselves suitably to them, let us remember

that 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,' and that if we have in the depth of our heart a living faith, if we have love to Christ and to those whom He loves, words of consolation will not be wanting to us.

"We may be asked, perhaps, in what way it is best to speak to the conscience—whether by conversation, by reading, or by prayer? We think that all these methods may be used, and that the instinct of the heart will point out at the moment which is the most suitable. At the commencement, conversation seems to be the best way; because we shall perceive, by the answers of the sick person, whether he has given attention, how far he has comprehended us, or whether our words, imperfectly understood, have not suggested false notions to his mind. But it is not always easy to obtain answers. Some are apt to relapse into incessant lamentations, and long descriptions of their ailments; and, along with much kindness, a certain degree of firmness of hand is required to lead them back to serious thoughts. Others give an unvarying assent to all that we say. We soon feel that their *yes* does not come from the heart, and yet it would be unjust to condemn it as hypocrisy. The fact is, they have as yet formed no opinion whatever on these subjects, because they have never laid them to heart; and they think it a duty to receive and

to acknowledge as true all that is said to them by well-intentioned persons, better informed than themselves. Instead of that perpetual, 'O yes, ma'am, it is very true!' which paralyses us, we should actually like better to hear an objection, which would afford us an opportunity of proving to them that they do not, in fact, believe all that they think they believe. But, again, this is not always easy.

"The blessing of God often accompanies the reading of His Word, of a hymn, &c. ; but prudence and tact are necessary, not to fatigue the hearers by reading too long. Few people have a just idea of the weakness of a sick person, and how difficult it is for him to fix his attention, particularly when his usual occupations so seldom require him to do so. And it is the more important to be short, because we ought afterwards to ascertain that he has understood, or at least listened. One might read for a whole year, without any result whatever, to a man apparently attentive and composed, but whose mind was occupied with other things.

"Every Christian ought, undoubtedly, to be a man of prayer; but it is not given to every one to pray aloud before others, and especially for others; and no one should, upon any account, do it when he does not feel himself called to do so. Pious sentiments, the

habit of a certain phraseology of prayer, are not sufficient—we must thoroughly comprehend the wants of our brother. We must, besides, express them in a way which may interest his heart, and lead him to pray along with us. It is not easy—perhaps not suitable—to attempt here to give advice upon this subject; but it may be useful to try the method suggested by Franke, of imploring the blessing of God on each verse, on each thought which strikes you, at the moment you have read it. In this way you will not run the risk of losing yourself in vain words; and the Scriptures thus applied, will perhaps sink more into the heart. These short ejaculations awaken the attention more than long prayers, which, though extempore, often become a peculiar formula that each individual is apt to fall into, which are frequently monotonous, wearisome, and sometimes degenerate into words absolutely devoid of thought. On such an occasion especially, we do not like to stop short, and seem to have nothing to say. We feel that that would scandalize the hearers, and we pray with words, hoping that ideas may come. Can we believe that mere words will ascend on high? No; thought alone gives them wings, and makes them rise even to the Throne of Grace.

“With respect to the lending of books, we do not disapprove of it. Certainly living words

will always have more influence than the dead letter ; but if there be one soul in a hundred which may be enlightened by a book, we ought not to reject this means. Fifty years ago, perhaps, the Bible alone might have sufficed for the poor ; but we live in an age of reading, and if we do not provide them with books, they will find them for themselves, and bad more readily than good. We do not like little religious novels ; but, on the other hand, we strongly recommend Christian biography. Judging by our own experience, nothing is more calculated to help us on in the way of salvation than reading the lives of others. Memoirs, besides, are often interesting, and may captivate even those who have as yet little love for the things of God. Well written works on useful knowledge, such as some almanacks, books upon agriculture, physics, &c., are not to be despised in a general way. But one danger is common to all these books, that of puffing up the reader, of making him think that he is not intended for the subordinate station which he occupies in society. Good religious books, on the contrary, all tend to reconcile man to his position.

“The first object that we ought to have in dealing with the souls of the poor, the first, and at the same time the most difficult to attain, is to make them feel their state of sin. ‘All these

things have I observed from my youth'—this is the answer we most frequently get. No doubt the rich man satisfies himself quite as easily as the poor with his own righteousness, but this, in him, appears in a less glaring form. He knows that self-love too openly shown, wounds that of others, and draws upon him painful mortifications. The poor man does not make these refined calculations; it concerns him above all to excite people's interest in him—to produce in their minds a favourable judgment of him; and the most effectual way seems to him simply to tell the good opinion he has of himself—'Certainly he had no hand in his own misfortunes, he has always conducted himself irreproachably;' and even if one is able to charge him with some flagrant transgression, he throws it off himself upon human weakness—it is generally a disaster that happened to him, hardly ever a sin that he committed; it appears, indeed, that his fault must be imputed to God.

“But what tact, what Christian wisdom, is necessary to bring a soul to feel its own misery! It is not enough to smite upon the breast, and say, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ Spiritual pride easily assumes an appearance of humility, which deceives the world, and even the sinner himself. A man is satisfied with himself—his life nearly corresponds with the idea which he has formed of piety and of virtue. It is not by

urging him at the very outset to acknowledge himself to be a miserable sinner, that we shall bring him a captive to the feet of Jesus. We must begin by gradually raising his moral standard, till at last we show him as his proper aim the perfection which God requires. Then we may hope that he will discover for himself how far he fell short of it. Farther, let us not forget it is above all necessary that we, who address ourselves to this poor man, should be deeply sensible of our own unworthiness in the sight of God—that we should often ask ourselves in all humility, ‘What have we that we have not received?’ We must tolerate in ourselves no affectation on this point; only what comes from the heart goes to the heart.

“Our readers have already perceived that we are not of those who think that there is nothing good in the poor, and who harshly let them know this, while giving or refusing alms. That is an irritating humiliation, which cannot lead to humility. A groundless confidence in our intercourse with them would certainly do much harm; but would not an absolute mistrust do as much? There is almost always lying dormant in the heart, even of the most deeply fallen, some good germ which love will be able to discover, and to quicken by prayer and perseverance. One of the most deplorable states of the soul is when it

has completely lost that sense of dignity, which is not incompatible with a knowledge of its own misery. Christianity humbles us, on the one hand, by showing us what a gulf there is between what we are, and what God would have us to be; but, on the other, it elevates us, as being the objects of the boundless love of the Son of God.

“We claim, then, much benevolence and charity for our suffering brethren, but it must be the benevolence and charity of the Gospel. While we desire that our hearts may not lose the power of being moved, which it is so important to preserve, we decidedly repress a weak and hurtful sensibility. Our Heavenly Father shows us, that, precisely because we love, we ought not to be afraid to cause a grief which will in the end bring comfort. False consolations, all such as are not founded on truth, are only vain palliatives, and do but retard the cure. How often has the secret hope been cherished by sick people, that their sufferings will of themselves give them a right to heaven! And what warrant is there for this in the Gospel? The message of mercy is there fully declared, no doubt, but the righteous and severe law also makes its voice be heard. Let us speak to those afflicted persons of eternal happiness, of that better country, where there will be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor labour, but let us also point out to them the narrow way of

holiness, through Jesus Christ, which can alone conduct them there.

“We often hear it said in the world that the poor are incapable of gratitude, and that among them, dislike to the wealthier classes increases in proportion to the benefits received from them. For our part, we are very far from assenting to so severe a judgment; and we think that, in such cases, the fault must rest as much with the givers as with the receivers. They give alms coldly, without real compassion, without any discrimination, in such a way as to do more harm than good; they then expect in return heartfelt gratitude and devoted affection; and as they do not meet with these, they complain of the depravity of the poor, and frequently they shut their hand and heart for ever against them.

“If the unfortunate could believe that you were actuated by genuine charity—if you visited them in their dwellings, talked with them of their affairs, showed that you take a real interest in what concerns them, and that you have their welfare at heart,—then, far from entertaining the painful idea, an idea which you must feel cannot but be extremely galling, that you give in order to get rid of them, they would feel themselves drawn towards you; you would no longer have to complain of their insensibility to your efforts; you would see that their eyes can fill with tears of

gratitude; you would hear them, not with their lips only, but from the depths of the heart, call down blessings on you from on high. We do not deny that there may be hearts which remain entirely unmoved by proofs of true charity, which may even recompense benefits by calumny. But, thank God, they are rare, very rare; and when we have once awakened affection and confidence, have we not opened a door in the heart to all that is beautiful and good? *

* "I think I shall never forget the touching letter which I received from poor Christopher F——, during his last illness in the hospital. He was originally a man of such indifferent character, that we had long hesitated about taking any charge of his family. But some proofs of real charity, some proceedings quite unlike those which he was accustomed to see, had opened his heart. Yet, after all, what had we done for him? We had given him some old silk to draw out, in order to shorten the long hours a little, and to enable him to earn a few pence. But the following is what moved him so much to gratitude. Three of his four children had become rickety, from the want of fresh air in the narrow street where they lived, and they could not walk. Their mother, who was obliged constantly to look after them, could not work enough to support them. It occurred to us to employ a poor man, for whom we could find no other occupation, on account of his weak intellect, to draw these children about, in a little carriage, for two or three hours every day. Their usual drive was the esplanade in front of the hospital; their poor father then dragged himself to the window, and his dim eyes brightened up at the sight of his happy children, who, in the enjoyment of the fresh air, were not long of recovering a healthy colour, and were soon able to come on foot to see their father. Those of my readers who are interested in these details, will be willing to follow me also to the house of Gervais. Charles Gervais was a carpenter; his wife went out as a washerwoman, and both gained their livelihood honestly. Three years ago, a splinter ran deep into Gervais' arm. A dreadful sore soon formed. Amputation was avoided with great difficulty; but

“It is generally expected of poor people who are assisted by the Government, that they should show a peculiar attachment to the State; perhaps this is to expect rather too much. Assuredly, the rich man, were it only for the security of his property, owes at least as much to the State as the poor man who gets his subsistence from it.

“There is, besides, in the human mind, a disposition to confound the idea of law with that of necessity and of obligation. Certainly we do

his hand was half paralysed, and his fingers distorted, so that he was incapable of continuing his business. What was to be done? His poor wife would willingly have worked night and day to support her husband and children; but, during his long illness, she had been obliged to sell or pawn her clothes, and with her scanty attire and emaciated countenance, she could not venture to present herself any where. As soon as we had procured work for her, and she had had enough of food for some days, she regained a respectable appearance. Poor Gervais was very desirous also to be able to help her by earning a little. We took him a pattern of those slippers of plaited straw which are worn in Ham-burgh. He found it very difficult when he began; the first pair, on which he had bestowed the utmost pains, and which he sent by his wife with great anxiety, was not accepted. But he did not lose courage; another pair got on better, and now, in spite of his poor crippled hands, he is one of the best workmen we have in that department.

“If you could have been present at the last visit we paid to them! With what joy, what tears of gratitude, the poor woman showed us her good clothes, a new and warm blanket on their bed, a good store of potatoes for the winter, and above all, the receipt for a large sum of rent, that had been in arrears! With what happiness she spoke of her husband's cheerfulness, of his gentleness, his kindness to her, of the change in their whole life, since he had again found occupation! Ah! such moments as these do us good, they are blessings from God, and powerful encouragements in a task where painful experience and deception are not wanting.”

not say this to excuse the poor for the improper way in which they sometimes receive assistance from Government; but only to induce Societies like ours, not to administer relief with a regularity which soon assumes somewhat of a legal character. Our pensioners can never say beforehand, 'To-morrow, Mrs ——— will be here, and bring me such and such a thing;' and we must acknowledge that more than once we have had reason to be ashamed of the gratitude which our poor brothers and sisters have expressed to us.

"Do we mean to say, then, that those who devote themselves to the administration of legal charity need not expect any gratitude? No; if they truly devote themselves to the work—if, along with the relief of which they are the distributors, they give something of their own (our readers will easily perceive that it is not of money we speak here)—those who are actuated by heartfelt charity are loved and blessed by the poor; we have seen many instances of this. But as for those who are only insensible wheels in a machine of beneficence, who often fulfil their task with lassitude and weariness, we ask in conscience, what right have they to claim for themselves a tribute of gratitude and love?

"We shall again refer here to what we ought to have begun with—the manner in which God, in His Word, requires us to exercise charity.

He wills that we should be as much occupied with the wants of the soul as with those of the body. Let us listen to those blessed and encouraging words of Isaiah : ‘ If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer ; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.’ And could our Lord Jesus call us more urgently to active and tender charity, than by these words—‘ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’

“ In the midst of the excitement which disturbs social life in our day, the higher and lower classes are regarded as enemies set in opposition to each other, and yet, assuredly, God has not willed it thus. Perhaps Societies such as ours, if they were multiplied, might be enabled to furnish some counterpoise to the numerous disorganizing associations, and to contribute towards the reconciliation of the rich and poor. If the relation between them were such as we desire, founded on Christianity, we do not share in that fear expressed by many, that a painful comparison would make the poor more discontented with their lot, Religion gives to things their real value ; it places man face to face with himself, and reconciles him to his position, by making him aspire, not to occupy a more exalted

place, but to fulfil honourably the vocation here below which God has assigned to him.

“ From these visits of charity there arises a mutual benefit, which has frequently reminded us of what St Paul wrote to his brethren at Rome : ‘ I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established ; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.’ Every one could give instances of the great and numerous faults of the poor ; but the humility, the silent resignation, and confidence in God, which are to be found in many, these lowly graces do not shine outwardly, and we can only learn to appreciate them by mingling with the poor, and viewing them long and closely.* O yes, very often, in the sight of their

* “ One of my first visits, as President of the Society, was to a poor blind old woman, who lived alone with her daughter, and had no other means of subsistence than the labour of the latter. It was in the depth of winter ; there was no fire in the room, and poor Jenny was using her needle with great difficulty, as her fingers were blue with cold. I was surprised, because, though the payment of work is small, I knew that Jenny’s ought to be nearly sufficient for their support. I was then told that during a long illness of the mother, they had got into arrears for three half years of their rent, and they were the more anxious to pay this debt, because their landlord was a kind-hearted man, who had never threatened to turn them out. They had that day in their cupboard twelve shillings laid by for that purpose ! Some years later, after our terrible fire in Hamburg, a collector went to them ; but on seeing the inside of their house, he wished to retire ; but the old blind woman inquired what it was, and when she learned

self-denial, of the triumph of their faith over misery, we have received in the dwelling of the poor, blessings a hundred-fold greater than those we conveyed to them. Is it not a living lesson for us to find in the midst of such trials, true resignation, true joy, true peace? And shall we not be ashamed afterwards, spoiled children as

that it was to ask for a subscription of a shilling a week to rebuild the Church of St Nicholas, where she had so often been edified, she was determined to subscribe herself. She succeeded, in fact, in raising this little sum, by diminishing her breakfast one half on six days of the week, only allowing herself to satisfy her hunger on Sunday. As she often received alms, she would not have considered it really giving of her own, unless she had deprived herself of something, and she had great pleasure in doing so.

"Shall I not say something of our poor Margaret, perhaps the most deformed person in the world? Although she cannot walk, but only creep about like a little child, her room is bright and clean. Her sight, however, is becoming weaker every day. A friend of ours, a surgeon, tried an operation on a cataract in her eye, but without success. She anticipates the speedy approach of total blindness. She is sad, but never murmurs—she finds in the depths of her heart so many reasons for thankfulness to God. Her happiness is to hear the Bible read; and the greatest joy she has had for a long time is having been in Church, where a lady took her two or three times in her carriage. We always read a chapter together when I go to see her. One day she told me she had something beautiful to say to me as well; it was a hymn very appropriate to her situation. She had once heard it read, and had a great desire to learn it; but how could she do so? An opportunity having occurred of doing a service to a neighbour, who, in return, expressed a wish to do something for her, Margaret had nothing more urgent to ask of her than that she would read this hymn to her till she knew it by heart. I said to her one day, 'My poor Margaret, does not the time seem very long to you?' 'No,' said she, 'in the morning I am occupied with my little household matters, and I take much longer to them than any one else would; after that I can-

we are, to show discontent and vexation when the smallest of our playthings is broken? We ought also to acknowledge that we have never felt the consolations of the Gospel with such power, as in presenting them to the afflicted.

“Many people who, like certain philosophers, take pleasure in dreaming of the innocence of

not work, it is true, but I sit in the nice arm-chair you gave me, and I think.’ I understood that her occupation then was to pray by turns for all those whom she knew, to repeat to herself various passages of Scripture, to think of the glory that is to come, of the goodness of God, and to keep herself in His holy Presence. I easily understood all this, though she did not express it to me fully, for Margaret does not like to make any parade of her religion. But she is so happy, that when some neighbour comes in to disturb her by gossiping, she generally regrets being interrupted in her solitude with God, and always returns to it with delight.

“I feel that I must restrain myself, and this consideration alone can stop me, when I have once entered on a subject that is so dear to me. So many gentle forms rise before me, so many unknown sacrifices of self, so many of those hidden lives, which are more sublime sermons than any that can be heard from pulpits. Yesterday a poor woman came to see me; she is of very limited capacity, and men may perhaps despise my old Catherine; but He Who looketh upon the heart knows the place that is prepared for her. As she earned less and less every year, she had come at last, in her poverty, to live upon food which injured her health, and she had not enough even of that. We procured for her, from a rich family, a good meal in the week, which always lasted her for two or three days. An old and infirm couple received the same bounty from another family; but they having gone to the country, the old people were deprived of this assistance. Catherine came to ask me to give her meal to these poor people once a fortnight. I accepted her offer without giving her any compensation; I scarcely even commended her for what she was doing, and did not allow her to see my emotion—I was so afraid of injuring that humble and sincere heart by a feeling of self-complacency. But we who live in luxury, are we capable of appreciating the amount of such a sacrifice?”

man in his natural state, find out their mistake whenever they meet with evil, and, recoiling with horror from the vices of the lower classes, they turn away from them, pronouncing condemnation upon them. For our part, we never had any such illusions. We know the deep corruption of the human heart; we know it first in our own, and then we know that the Scriptures declare, that not only poverty, but all the evils in the world, are the consequence of sin. If we refuse our help to the poor, because they have faults, what right have we to expect consolation for ourselves in our sorrows? What! because we find them improvident, inconsiderate, without energy, shall we condemn them? Ah! let us rather see in all this an urgent appeal to interest ourselves in our brethren—to come to their aid with our counsels. We do not, in acting thus, go contrary, as it might appear at first sight, to that essential principle of our Society, to distinguish by our assistance the better class of the poor. Those whom we refuse to help, are persons who give themselves up, openly and consciously, to the slavery of vice. Not that we mean to say there is no hope even for them; but we do not feel that our influence is sufficiently powerful to act upon them with success.

“The poor are, in general, proud. Let us take care that this fault does not make us unjust,

because it wounds us more directly than any other; and let us not forget that it is sometimes only a praiseworthy sense of honour, exaggerated, or it may be, ill expressed. Falsehood is very common among them; but here, again, let us not condemn them without remembering their peculiar position—without looking into our own heart. Children, whom we take pleasure in representing to ourselves as so innocent, have all, more or less, a certain tendency to falsehood, and the vigilant eye of education is needed to check this evil tendency at the outset. But few of the poor have time or opportunity to watch over their children, and they generally form a very false estimate of their faults. The breaking of some small article will draw down upon them a severe punishment; whereas a lie, if no particular harm results from it, is scarcely made a subject of reproof. Accustomed thus to consider untruth as a very trifling fault, can we be surprised if, later in life, these same children have recourse to it in addressing themselves to the rich? And do not these latter also encourage it, by often giving without inquiry? When we acquire an intimate knowledge of the poor, we cannot fail to discover, in their past or present circumstances, many grounds of excuse, if not of justification, and, by degrees, in this view of the subject, disapprobation assumes the character of pity. We shall

always repeat, let us have compassion, let us try to correct, but let us not sternly condemn.

“Again, we shall suppose for a moment that we are not doing any apparent good—that we meet with nothing but ingratitude and coldness; will that be a sufficient reason for abandoning our labours? Assuredly not. Success should never be so much our motive in undertaking any work of charity, as to make failure a cause of despondency. It is a great fault, a consequence of human pride, to expect too much fruit from our own exertions. O! let us give thanks to God that He graciously permits us to labour in a little corner of His vineyard—to give the smallest relief to a sick person—to say a word of warning to a sinner, even though we may not cure the sick person, or though the sinner may not be converted. We must walk by faith and not by sight. Perhaps it may be only at the Great Day of harvest that we shall know which of our seeds, cast on the ground, have brought forth fruit. Meanwhile, we may be assured that in the Kingdom of God, what is truly good can never be entirely lost. Let us do, lovingly and conscientiously, all that we can, and commit the result to God.

“The greatest objection which has been advanced against the religious tendency of our Society is, that it encourages hypocrisy. This objection is very serious, and is founded on

a real danger ; but we think it is exaggerated. And, first of all, we must not lightly use the withering name of hypocrisy. In like manner as one is trained by degrees to good habits, so also there may be in religion small beginnings, which rest at first on the authority of others. This is certainly not that faith which springs from a deep, heartfelt sense of want, but yet it is of some value—it may lead to something more independent—more elevated ; it is at least assuredly not hypocrisy. What is the faith of a child ? Is it not entirely founded on the authority of its parents and teachers ? Later in life, this faith ought to acquire a more individual and firm basis ; but, mean time, shall we accuse the child of falsehood, because he calls that holy and true, which is held as holy and true, by those whom he respects and loves ? The time is not long past since the lower classes followed the example of the higher ranks of society, in pouring ridicule and contempt on the faith of their forefathers. Even at this day, an insidious current of evil has not ceased to flow down from the higher classes ; may it not be permitted to us, in like manner, to cause a sanctifying influence to descend upon the poor ?

“ We do not deny that the danger of hypocrisy exists ; we do not deceive ourselves on this point. Nothing is so odious in our opinion as

religious cant, especially when it is used to gain an object, or as a lever to move the hearts of others. Unbelief, yes, the grossest unbelief, appears to us a hundred times better than hypocrisy—the one excites in our mind profound compassion, the other calls for unmingled condemnation. But are we without defence against this danger? We think not. Nothing but the hope of deceiving others, and thereby getting advantage of them, can lead a man to hypocrisy. If this hope is taken away, the danger no longer exists. Now, we do not come into contact with our poor people only on certain occasions, when they are, so to speak, in their best attire, soul and body. We visit them, we surprise them in their daily life; we not only hear them speak, we see them act, and can judge if their conduct is in accordance with their words. We shall afterwards recur to the fact, that the very constitution of our Society gives us a facility in discovering deception. But precisely because deception is odious to us, we must not form our judgment hastily, and run the risk of chilling our hearts by unjust suspicion. If our suspicions are awakened, let us wait a little, and redoubled vigilance will soon enlighten us.

“ Hypocrisy is not, alas! confined to religion. Flattery, which poets place in courts and in the circles of the great world, is known also in the

dwellings of the poor. The most vulgar man often uses it with rare skill ; it is for us to guard against it by prayer to be kept from the evil of insinuating speeches. A great display of words, a very emphatic way of expressing gratitude and extolling to the skies the little that we have done, all this certainly will not impose upon us. But more artful persons know also how to say only a few simple words ; their eyes fill with tears ; the expression of their countenance alone tells us what they feel. Well, here again we have to guard our own hearts, and we must require something more than this. If every profession of gratitude, for instance, is accompanied by a new demand, it ought to appear to us only as a bait offered to our self-love in order to gain more from us. But when we ourselves discover wants which they did not venture to express to us—when they eagerly tell us of assistance received from others—are not these so many proofs of sincerity ? The gratitude which we value the most, that which is free from all deception, is the good and conscientious use of benefits bestowed. In like manner, we only consider faith as sincere when we see the effects of it in the life, in the faithful discharge of our earthly calling.

“The objections which we feel the most deeply, as may be supposed, are those which tend to prove that, instead of doing good to the

poor, we may even do them harm. We hear it said, ‘By thus mixing yourselves up in their affairs, you will accustom them to expect that others should always think for them.’ But our intention is not to keep them in leading-strings—it is rather to rouse them, to lead them on to a full development of their faculties. It is evident that, with the average degree of moral and intellectual culture in the members of our Society, our relations with them will in some measure resemble those of a guardian. But it is a guardian who desires speedily to fit his pupil for emancipation, or, let us rather say, to teach him to take hold of the surer Hand of his Heavenly Father, ever stretched forth to guide him.”

“As we said at the beginning, we willingly provide for our sick people, nurses, who are themselves chosen from among our poor, and this is a kind of assistance of which experience has taught us the value.

“‘Well,’ it is said by some, ‘do not you see that you thus deprive friends and relations of an opportunity of exercising brotherly love?’ God forbid that we should rob them of this jewel, perhaps the brightest in their crown! (Matt. xxv.) But the wants of a family visited by sickness are so pressing and so various, that, besides what is done by our nurses, there still remains a vast field open to benevolent persons. When

we find a poor neighbour watching by the bed of a sick person, do you think we should say to her dictatorially, 'Go away, my good woman, you are no longer wanted here—all will go on very well without you.' O no! on the contrary, holding out our hand to her, we shall show our joy at seeing her there, and we shall beg of her to work along with us. What she has done has undoubtedly a greater value in the sight of God; but shall we on that account withdraw? Shall the rich withhold their gifts because the Lord will specially bless the widow's mite?

"And with regard to the women whom we employ, may not they show themselves to be kind and compassionate? Because they are paid for it, will their care necessarily lose all the character of charity? What! must those who receive some recompense for their labour, be thereby prevented from performing it with zeal and devotedness! But I need say no more; all must feel the inconsistency of such reasoning. That sometimes the relations between our nurses and the sick persons have assumed an unpleasant character, have even degenerated into a quarrel, need surprise no one. We expected this beforehand, knowing the weakness of our own nature. But we gladly testify that much more frequently we have awakened in the hearts of these women feelings of tender charity.

“On this subject it will not be useless to say a few words about those misunderstandings in families or neighbourhoods, in which we may be appealed to as judges. Let us decline this as often as we can, leaving the people to settle their own affairs among themselves. The differences will thus come to an end the sooner, whereas, the interest that we might take in them, would give to the dispute an importance which it would not have had otherwise. If we cannot decidedly stand aloof, let us beware of asking too many questions as to the details. Those interrogatories which irritate and produce bad feeling, are the painful duty of the criminal judge, but not of the ministry of peace in which we take a part. And let us not forget the difference of education, which gives to the very same words quite another meaning. The same scene, the same provocations which would be followed among us by an irreconcilable alienation, will be forgotten among them, perhaps, on the morrow.

“Another fear has been expressed to us, that by thus coming in contact with the wealthy, the expectations of the poor, already high enough, may be unduly increased. Certainly much prudence is required here, and it is a settled principle among us, not to spoil our poor, never to do more for them than is necessary. But we believe it is easier to keep them within proper bounds in this

respect, by visiting them in their own dwellings, than by receiving their demands in our houses. This is more important than some people think ; let us consider it for a few moments.

“ The poor man leaves his small and dark room, where every thing indicates want and misery ; he enters the abode of a rich man, where all, by contrast, seems to him abundance and luxury. He has carefully prepared his little speech, and in order to describe his situation, strong expressions are not spared ; in the midst of all this splendour, he will make them stronger still. He naturally exaggerates to himself the riches of the possessor of so many things, and therefore concludes that if he is refused assistance, it is only from ill-will. And perhaps he comes at an inconvenient hour ; we have not time to enter into conversation with him ; he begins his speech, which is generally diffuse ; we interrupt him, begging him to shorten it ; that puts him out, he looses the thread of his discourse ; and without intending it, perhaps he becomes still more tedious, till at last we do not know what he would be at. We say to ourselves, some money, at all events, is always welcome to the indigent ; we give it him to have done with him, as much as from pity for his misery ; the poor man takes it as a tribute from the superfluity of the rich, and returns home humiliated

and dissatisfied. We do not say that this picture is correct in all cases; but no one will deny that it describes what often takes place, and that in a great measure it explains the position of the two hostile camps—the poor seeming to think all means lawful, by which the rich may be made to open their inexhaustible purse, and they, on their side, shutting themselves up in a feeling of general mistrust.

“Let us now see what happens when we go to visit the poor man in his own house. First of all, he feels himself flattered, honoured by such a visit; it is an assurance to him that we are really interested in him, that we have a sincere desire to do him good. We, on our part, having chosen our time, have leisure to listen to him. Surprised in the midst of his daily life, he cannot have recourse to any disguise; he has not time to compose his harangue for a solemn audience, but he speaks naturally, as he might do with a neighbour. He laments over his misery, but he cannot venture to exaggerate much, because a single glance around is sufficient to assure us of many things, especially with those favourable opportunities of comparison which we possess in our knowledge of other families. We enter with him into the details of his little household, and then, how much we learn, and how many useful counsels we may

also give! One could hardly imagine how accurately a little practice enables us to judge at once of what is suitable or not suitable for a poor household. He at last comes to demands; and if we must refuse some of these, be it so; the impression that our visit has of itself given, that we feel a real interest in him, takes away its greatest bitterness from the refusal. Our relations have thus something of a paternal character, which would be very imperfectly represented by the idea of patron and dependent.

“We wish not to overlook any objections that have been brought forward; especially, because, as they are nearly the same in every country, we may, in this way, assist some who would like to establish an Association similar to ours. There is no rich family, it has been said to us, without some poor pensioners. If they give to a Society the money destined for their works of charity, these poor people will lose by it, and the family will be deprived of the pleasure of giving personally. Before answering, we should like to quote the following extract from an author who seems to us to have described very correctly the character of the different kinds of charity. ‘Government,’ says he, ‘here, as elsewhere, cannot act individually, but on general principles, and is guided by inflexible impartiality in granting as well as in refusing. A private individual, on the contrary,

may, without being accused of injustice, choose the objects of his own bounty, allow himself to be influenced by circumstances, or by a character which particularly interests him. The State only provides for pressing, vital wants, such as hunger, cold, and nakedness. The charitable individual may take a wider range, and alleviate privations of another kind, humiliations, trials of the heart. The state denies all help to those who will not work, and tries to force them to do so, by its refusal; the individual makes little account of the origin of the misery which touches and moves him, and only thinking of the present moment, gives, without considering whether money which has been gained with no trouble may not do more harm than good. Between these two ways of exercising charity, a third has been introduced, which seems to combine their advantages, while it avoids their dangers—I mean private Associations. They have in fact, as it were, united the freedom of individual benevolence, with certain rules of legal charity. They are equally removed from the thoughtless sensibility of the one, and the abstract unfeelingness of the other. They examine, they weigh each particular case, but in itself, by itself; and not according to general rules fixed beforehand. Thus, more beneficial in their results than are the exertions of individuals, they receive more gratitude than the State.'

“ We are willing to believe that there is some exaggeration in what is here said of the want of consideration in charitable persons, but still we may ask, is every family sufficiently informed of the morality, or the actual misery of the poor people whom they support? Do they follow, with regard to them, a certain matured plan, in order to assist them in a really useful way? or rather do they give without inquiry, without any motive, except that they have always given, and that these poor people have become, in some degree, pensioners of the house? Certainly, if every benevolent person had time to visit regularly the poor whom he assists, our Association would appear to us of far less importance; but is that the case? We go further and say, that even when a person is firmly resolved only to distribute his alms with the greatest discrimination, he cannot do it so efficiently as an Association.

“ And, in the first place, even in those things that interest us the most, we require, in order to overcome a certain natural indolence, to feel ourselves bound by the idea of obligation—of responsibility. We know that we ought to visit a family, but to-day we cannot; we shall do it to-morrow. To-morrow comes, and with it another hindrance. We again put it off, and thus from day to day. If, on the other hand, we are, as

members of a Society, obliged to do it, all these obstacles give way of themselves. But even if we suppose that one who acts singly, might be as regular in the duties for which he is responsible only to himself, can he do as much good? Although pecuniary aid is by no means the most important part of the visiting system, yet there are many cases in which it is indispensable; and how many persons have kindness, time, and strength, but very little money at their disposal. Singly, perhaps, they would accomplish very little; whereas, in a Society, this time and strength would find employment to great advantage; because, in this way, the deficiencies of one are supplied by another. One person has much experience, another has a certain instinctive penetration, a third has a happy method of arrangement; one is rich, another has friends or relations who may be useful. Each member is enriched by the possessions of another, and the Society by those of all.

“Our multiplied relationships with the poor are useful to us in various ways. Sometimes we can give good advice with perfect confidence, having seen it put in practice elsewhere. Sometimes we meet with a poor man who is disturbed in his conscience; he is alone, in trying circumstances; he has need of a friend who has experienced the same inward conflict. In this respect, we have

often been able to assist him, and bring him into contact with the very person he wanted, and who has been a great blessing to him.*

“How favourably situated we are also for discovering the artifices, the snares which are laid for us! It might be easy for an artful man to deceive a single person; but as each family is, on our plan, visited by three or four members in turn, what escapes one, will probably be perceived by another, and in their mutual communications, the deception is soon brought to light. Those very numerous relations, of which we have already spoken, have often been the means of bringing to us unexpected information; besides, it may be supposed, the explanations which may be furnished by the authorities, by the police, or

*“Sometimes we find two afflicted persons, lonely, and suffering under different infirmities, whose existence we are able to cheer, by bringing them together. It was thus that we realized, in some degree, the apologue of the blind man and the paralytic. Old George had not been able to leave his uncomfortable room for years, because he could not walk even a few steps without support, and his wife was too little and too weak to assist him. And yet he had such a desire to breathe the fresh air, and to see the green fields and trees once more! When he was recommended to us, we were interested in a tapestry-weaver who was young, but having become almost blind from cataract, was incapable of continuing his trade. The tapestry-maker was employed to accompany George, once a week, into the country. Perhaps some reader may here remark, that the money with which we are entrusted, ought to be used only for necessary things, and not for mere enjoyments. But even if he makes this reflection, we are sure that his heart has already excused us; and, indeed, that in our place, he would have acted as we did.”

by clergymen, are more readily given to us than they could be to single individuals. Lastly, one fact which proves more than all the rest is, that the unworthy poor have a great horror of our Association. As we have said, interest alone, and the hope of deceiving, can make a man become a hypocrite; we have thus arrested more than one, on this perilous descent.

“ Many people have frankly avowed to us that they gave without discrimination, and thus perhaps did more harm than good, but that it was impossible for them to make the necessary inquiries. We were inclined to ask them to send all their poor to us, but our means did not allow of this. After mature consideration, this is the proposal that we made to our fellow-countrymen, which was accepted by many, and has had the happiest results :—‘ You receive a pressing demand, which seems to you to deserve attention, or you have long assisted a family without being quite sure that they are worthy of it. Well, send to us the name and address of these persons, along with the sum of ten dollars.* If we find those people unworthy of your bounty, either from their immorality, or from any other cause, we shall send

* “ It is evident that the amount of the sum must depend on circumstances, on the particular customs of the place, and that it is not on that, we ought to fix our attention, but on the principle.”

you a report to that effect, and return you the money, only retaining five marks for the funds of the Society.* If, on the contrary, our information is favourable, we shall receive those distressed people into the number of our poor, we shall treat them accordingly, and we shall make no other demand upon you on their behalf for a year. At the end of that period, we shall send you an account of the expenditure of your ten dollars, along with a circumstantial report of the visits that have been made. You will then be able to judge if you wish to continue on this footing for another year.'

"About the same time that we embodied these suggestions in our regulations, we received a similar proposal from a rich and benevolent lady, which gave us great pleasure, by confirming us in our idea. She offered to us a large annual subscription, on condition that all the begging letters with which she was assailed, should be sent to us, that we should give her an account of our inquiries with regard to each of them, and that afterwards we should admit, among our poor, four of these families at our discretion. Those letters are really a scourge, much more expensive than street-begging, and for the most part as little deserving of real interest. It is desir-

* "It is of importance to keep copies of these reports, since we often have to do with the same parties."

able that the example of this lady should be followed, which would often bring before us repetitions of the same letters. In fact, those who have recourse to this way of making money, do not content themselves, whatever they may say, with writing to one person only ; their letters are a kind of circular, addressed to all those whom they believe to be charitable, and not acquainted with each other.*

“ As we are upon the subject of our relations with the benevolent public, we shall here add a few words on our method of collecting money. We have been much censured, as females, for coming forward in this way, for making a public appeal, which necessarily implies giving a report, also public. But we have great objections to the plan of only applying to our friends and acquaintances. Many of them, in fact, cannot refuse, and give without pleasure, more in consideration of the person who asks than of the work, in which perhaps they feel no interest. An appeal to the public, on the other hand, produces free gifts, willingly bestowed by those who approve of the object.

* “ Some one will perhaps think, in reading this, that among us, the clergymen are always ready to furnish any information that is desired, regarding the poor, and that those who dare not refer to any of them, may justly be looked upon with suspicion. It is true, but are we the only persons who regret that so much of the clergymen's time should be occupied in all this trifling correspondence about alms-giving ? ”

“But let us here beware of giving to our Society too exclusive an importance. It is *our* Society. This word serves to indicate the danger. The field of charity is very wide, and we do but cultivate a little corner of it. If others employ their resources in another part, and for this reason refuse their aid to us, let us not ungenerously complain of this; let us rather rejoice that they have undertaken what we cannot do ourselves. Ah! if we were truly actuated by humility and charity, we should not be puffed up with the little that we can do; we should praise the Lord for the blessed vocation to which He has called us; we should ask without shame, for our indigent brethren; and we should accept refusals without bitterness.

“The sums obtained by collections, or those still larger, arising from legacies, we lay out immediately, not thinking of forming a capital, but wishing, on the contrary, to live from day to day. Many people will consider this principle strange, perhaps inexcusable; but it seems to us to be the natural condition of an institution founded in charity and faith in Jesus Christ. We thus experience, in a more visible and palpable way, how entirely our work is dependent on the annual, daily blessing of God, and we are the more led to prayer. We also feel the more strongly, perhaps, how important it is to preserve the con-

fidence of our fellow-citizens ; we redouble our efforts to deserve it, and this dependence keeps us in a salutary state of humility."

A sum of 13,500 marks having been given to the Friends of the Poor of Hamburgh, Mademoiselle Sieweking was happy to be able to apply it to the accomplishment of her favourite plan, the establishment of one of those cheap lodging-houses, the advantages of which she has already represented to us. The site having been given gratuitously by the town, this sum was sufficient for the construction of a building that could accommodate twelve families. This is not the place for describing the plan of the house, nor for giving all the details of internal organization, which, however, we are ready to communicate to those of our readers who take a particular interest in it. On the 18th of November 1840, it was solemnly consecrated. All those who were to inhabit it, were assembled in the hall intended for worship, and after prayer and singing a hymn, Mademoiselle Sieweking gave them a simple and touching address, from which we shall here make some extracts:—

" Let us consider for a little, my friends, what has been our object in building this house, in which we have just had the privilege of calling together upon God. First of all, you may believe, we desire to alleviate your poverty, the

burden of which we understand better since we have come to know you more intimately. It is, indeed, sometimes a very heavy burden—is it not? especially when sickness comes to add to it; but is it not also true, that many have already found that there is in it something salutary. You may all be assured that it is salutary, for our Heavenly Father has towards you ‘thoughts of peace, and not of evil.’

“You will, in the first place, find some alleviation in the circumstance, that the rent here is not the half of what you have hitherto paid; and, at the same time, you will have a more comfortable lodging than you could procure in all the town at a price ten times higher. But do not forget that we shall exact the payment of the rent with strict regularity; it will be asked from you, in small sums, every Monday, and the lodgers who fall into arrears will be immediately dismissed. We shall also provide stores of wood and potatoes, which we shall be able to sell to you, by retail, much cheaper than in the market. In short, we have no doubt you will yourselves discover every day new advantages, which will attach you to the house. Only think what happiness it will give you to see your children playing in the garden in spring, and what good the fresh air will do them!

“But, my friends, what real good will it ac-

comply that we alleviate your temporal misery—that we even succeed in removing it entirely, if you are not rich towards God? We desire, then, that in this house you may find encouragement to walk in faith and love, and to lead an upright and sincere life in the sight of God. You have surely all read the inscription over the door, ‘Forbear one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ But what good will it do, though you read it every day, if it be not engraved in your hearts? If you have something to bear from your brother, do not forget that he also has much to bear from you. When we began to speak of building this house, every one objected—‘It will not succeed, the people will never agree.’ And I replied, ‘I hope that it will succeed; they are worthy people to whom we mean to grant this privilege, and they will be able to keep out of quarrels and disputes.’ It is for you now, my friends, to prove that I was right; and be assured of this beforehand, those who expect to please us by telling us tales of each other, are completely mistaken. Come and tell us all the good that you know of your neighbours, and you will be always well received.

“As for you, my children, we wish to recommend to you also to live in peace and love together. Are not you delighted to see all these little

companions around you? but if you quarrel, there will be an end of all happiness. You, mothers, take care not to meddle in the quarrels; your children will soon make peace among themselves, but if you take a part in the altercation, the smallest trifle may become serious. If your interposition should be absolutely necessary, once more, take care! do not have one balance for the faults of your own child, and another for those of his companions. It is of little consequence that he should suffer some injustice from some one of them, for he must, sooner or later, serve this apprenticeship; but if you take his part when he is in the wrong, you do him a great injury. Bring up your children in the fear of God; this is the greatest service you can do to them. We wished to assist you in this, and that is the reason why this house is established, as much as possible, on Christian principles. You remember the ancient hymn, which is still sung—

‘ And grant that to Thine honour, Lord,
Our daily toil may tend,
That we begin it at Thy word,
And in Thy favour end.’

But perhaps you do not know how much true wisdom is contained in these simple words. We shall be glad to know that you are assembled here morning and evening, to pray together to our gracious Father in Heaven. Mr N., your neighbour, will come every day to conduct wor-

ship; he will make it short, because he knows that you are all very busy: but is it not true that, if you really wish it, you may easily find a quarter of an hour at night for prayer? However, it is evident that no one should be forced into this, for the Lord only esteems what is given to Him with a free and joyful heart.

“You can, no doubt, read and pray each alone, but do not forget that a peculiar blessing attends united worship. Consider how good it is for your children to be early accustomed to Christian fellowship; and as regards yourselves, be assured that there is no more certain way of living in love and peace, than by daily drawing near together to the Throne of Grace.

“This domestic worship, you are aware, ought not to take the place of public worship, and we shall always be glad to know that you attend it regularly. Young mothers are usually kept away from it on account of their children. By taking this duty on you by turns, we hope that you may often be able to go to Church. But that signifies little, if your religion does not appear in your life. Pray and Work; this is our motto, let it also be yours.

“As for you, my female friends, your love to God may also be shown in the way you conduct your household affairs—in the order and cleanliness which we hope to see there. Bear in mind

that in this nice little apartment, so clean and neat, and quite new, you have no longer the same excuse that you had in your damp and gloomy dwellings in the town."

After some remarks addressed to the men on the subject of drunkenness, and on the regulation against bringing any liquor into the house on pain of immediate dismissal, Mademoiselle Sieweking concluded thus:—"We have it in our power to give you pleasure, my friends, but we should like also to receive some from you. And, in the first place, you can afford us much joy—that joy of which St John, in his old age, wrote thus to a friend:—'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.' You can also pray for us; and when you do so, I entreat of you to ask of God not only that He will grant us health and a long life, but also, and above all else, that His Spirit may work more and more effectually in us, so that we may grow in love and in faith, and may become willing and useful instruments in His Hands.

"Yes, we set a great value on your prayers. Perhaps the blessings which they bring down upon us may remain hidden from us here below. But what is concealed upon earth will be made manifest in Heaven; and if, when we meet before the Throne of God, you desire still to prove to us your gratitude, we shall also have to ex-

press ours to you ; our feelings towards each other will then be absorbed in our common gratitude to God, as to Him Who puts into the hearts of men both to will and to do according to His good pleasure."

We think we may interest our readers by adding, that this lodging-house has hitherto accomplished its object, in regard to health as well as to morals, and that domestic worship is attended more and more regularly every day. They will also learn with pleasure, that not only was it spared, by the mercy of God, in the awful fire of 1842, but also that two new houses have just been built, in pursuance of an arrangement between Mademoiselle Sieweking and the Commissioners for rebuilding the town. The Society of the Friends of the Poor has besides suffered less from the effects of that calamity than might have been feared. In fact, if, on the one hand, rents are raised, if the trade in articles of luxury is fallen off ; on the other hand, all those within reach, who can work as house-builders, have still as much employment as they want ; and the Society is so generally appreciated in Hamburgh, that there has been no sensible diminution in the annual subscriptions, which is very remarkable. Much interest is shown in it by all classes ; thus several bakers, butchers, grocers, &c., allow orders to be given upon them to the amount of so

many pounds a-week, for bread, meat, rice, sugar, &c.

Before concluding, we think it may be useful to give some counsels addressed by Mademoiselle Sieweking to her associates, which have not found a place in the course of this statement. They appear to us to be eminently characterised by wisdom and good sense :—

“The friend of the poor ought to be simple without ostentation in her exterior, as well as in her character ; she will have pleasure in increasing her small fund for charity by all the economy she can practise in her dress. Do we therefore advise her to disregard conventional usages and all the little proprieties that belong to her position in society ? Far from it. The rebuke of Socrates to Antisthenes, ‘ I see your pride peeping through the holes in your cloak,’ might be applied with still more reason to Christians, who ought not to make a parade of any thing, above all of humility.

“The friend of the poor ought also to observe a most minute exactness in her proceedings, either with the poor or with the Association ; every thing ought to be written down correctly. If a single individual requires to keep order and regularity in her affairs, what must it be in a common undertaking, in which the smallest wheels must all move in unison ? She will regularly attend the

meetings of Committee, in order to keep up a lively interest, not only in her own department, but in the work in general. Her presence, besides, and the verbal explanations that she may give, will avoid many delays.

“ If she has any proposal to make she ought to do so frankly; but then to listen, without prejudice, to the remarks which may be addressed to her. Too often our self-love is brought into play in these matters; we like better to elude an objection by some evasive answer, than to consider it seriously. We do not bring forward a proposal without having previously thought over it long, and we need to exercise some self-denial in order to give to opposing arguments their due weight. But this self-denial is absolutely necessary for the true wellbeing of the Society; without it deliberation is impossible, and amidst the waves of keen and animated discussions, charity is apt to make shipwreck. Let us keep calm and quiet; let us abstain from little private conversations; let each one wait for her turn to speak, and not introduce a new subject till that under consideration is finished. Need we add, that when once a decision is made, the minority ought to yield with a good grace?

“ This is a delightful vocation—it is full of blessing—it is according to the Will of God; but it has also its dangers, and before undertaking it,

we must consider them maturely. ‘Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost whether he have sufficient to finish it?’ Alas! they are not scenes of happiness, or of gentle sadness, that the friend of the poor will most frequently behold, but spectacles such as demand self-denial at the very outset, that she may not turn away her eyes from them. She will there see human misery, both physical and moral, to such a degree as she is probably far from suspecting. Were she even always able to give effectual help! But those cases are very rare in which it is possible to do more than give a little solace or alleviation. Besides, and we wish again to bring this forward, because it is to our weak hearts the hardest trial of all, we must expect irony, ridicule, and severe remarks. If in no case can we confess Christ without offending the world, this will be still more so when, in our mode of acting, we leave the ordinary path which they think we ought to follow. Will you be able to bear this ridicule, these reproaches, in all charity, in all humility? Ask yourself this solemnly before God.

“And now, we may say with confidence, that she who feels herself strong in faith and in the love of her Saviour, will experience that none of these things can move her. She will give joyful thanks for the little that is given her to do for

Him to the least of these His brethren ; and she will be kept in peace, when, ‘for His sake, men shall say all manner of things against her falsely.’ If, notwithstanding all her efforts and her prayers, she sees no change of heart produced, she will not be cast down, knowing that in the Kingdom of God nothing is lost, and in the Great Day of harvest, when ‘the reapers are the angels,’ it will perhaps be found that many a seed sown by her, and which she may have thought was choked, has afterwards taken root, and brought forth fruit abundantly to the glory of God.”

THE END.

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